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How I Met the Holy Spirit (and You Can, Too)

I think it's safe to say that, when we hear the story about Pentecost in the Acts of the Apostles ([Acts 2:1-4](#)), most of us have this kind of reaction: *“Well that’s cool, I guess. Good for them, with all those flames above their heads, and the Holy Spirit stuff.”*

That was my reaction for a long time, anyway. I knew the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, was real, and that He gave the Apostles courage to do really intense evangelizing. But I never thought much more about it than that.

Weirdly, we Catholics don't talk too much about the Holy Spirit and who He is in everyday conversation. Jesus we understand better; the Holy Spirit, less so. And any kind of talk about the gifts of the Holy Spirit just weirded me out.

Until I met the Holy Spirit as a real Person...and He did something very similar in me.

Without getting into every single detail of what happened, I'll give you the nutshell version of my experience: I went on a retreat in college called [“Fan Into Flame”](#) (I ended up going on four of them), which was focused on encountering the Holy Spirit in a new and deeper way. As we got into who the Holy Spirit was on this retreat, I was uncomfortable at first — but throughout the retreat, I found myself opening up a little more, despite my discomfort. As I came to understand how the Holy Spirit works in our lives and grew more comfortable with worshipping God through song throughout the retreat, the idea of surrendering my life to Him in a deeper way didn't scare me as much.

At one point in the retreat, our small groups prayed together to intercede for each other for particular requests: to be freed from things that kept us from God, to receive the Holy Spirit in a deeper way or to receive His gifts. I don't remember what I prayed for — but I do remember that, as I was being prayed over, I had this gentle urge to rest, to just let go — and I experienced an overwhelming peace within me that resonated through my whole body. I couldn't stop smiling because I couldn't contain the joy inside me. It was bursting!

Words fall entirely short when I try to communicate what this experience actually was. All I can say is that I met the Person of the Holy Spirit in that moment.

When I stood up after what felt like hours, the time of prayer was over and, from what I could tell, almost every soul in the room had experienced the same thing I had, or at least something very similar.

We had just experienced our own Pentecost.

This it wasn't just a one-time thing, though. Since that first encounter, I have on other occasions experienced the Holy Spirit in powerful ways, and I experience Him in a quieter way on a daily basis.

Pentecost was a real thing. The Apostles receiving the Holy Spirit was a real thing. **But this outpouring of the Holy Spirit wasn't just for the Apostles.** We were all meant to receive the same thing. We are all meant to know Him, to walk with Him and to receive the graces we need for our daily lives from Him.

We all receive Him at baptism, and then again in a deeper way with the sacrament of confirmation. But often, the potential for the graces we could have lie dormant until we give Him the permission to come into our hearts.

So how can you encounter the Holy Spirit in a deeper way and experience a more profound outpouring of His gifts in your own life?

1. Pray to the Holy Spirit. Begin your prayers by saying, "Come, Holy Spirit." Ask for help in difficult situations, or just start by saying this simple prayer every day:

"Oh Holy Spirit, soul of my soul, I adore you. Enlighten, guide, strengthen and console me. Tell me what I ought to do, and command me to do it. I promise to be submissive in whatever you ask of me and whatever you permit to happen to me. Only show me what is your will."

2. Listen to promptings/inspirations when they come. Sometimes you will sense urges to do something you might not have thought of yourself. This is called an "inspiration." The way to tell when it's the Holy Spirit's inspiration is that it's always something good, and it's usually something you'd rather not do. See [Acts 9:10-19](#) for the perfect example of that.

None of us will ever follow inspirations perfectly. But the more we do it, the more they

will come. Listening to and obeying the Holy Spirit is how we grow in holiness.

3. Stick to prayer and the sacraments. If you want to get closer to God in any way, this is pretty much the way to do it. And the more you do stay close to prayer and the sacraments, the more you will notice the Holy Spirit in your life.

4. Pray to be freed from any lies or attachments that are keeping you from experiencing the fullness of the Spirit. Simply put, our sin, attachments or lies we believe against God or ourselves can keep us from experiencing the Holy Spirit in a more meaningful way. It's powerful to pray to be freed from these things! But it's not a game of hide and seek. You don't have to be digging around, asking yourself, "What's wrong with me? Why don't I feel close to God?" (How many of us have done that?) Simply ask God to reveal what He wants you to be free of, and pray with that and trust that He will free you of it over time and give you more of Himself.

Here are some deliverance prayers you can pray:

[Anima Christi](#)

[St. Michael Prayer](#)

[Prayer for Deliverance](#)

[Prayer for Inner Healing](#) (by Ransomed Ministries)

5. Know that the gifts (and fruits) of the Holy Spirit are for you. Ask for them. God gives us spiritual gifts for the edification of the Church (I Corinthians 14:12), to build up the Body of Christ in love and unity, "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (I Peter 4:11).

You can pray to receive greater gifts. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are knowledge, counsel, piety, fortitude, fear of the Lord (awe), understanding and wisdom.

The fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, generosity, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control and chastity.

Experiencing the Holy Spirit might not be a crazy, "emotional" experience for you — so just because you don't sense Him moving you emotionally doesn't mean He isn't at work. Our emotions are not the point. It may involve them; it may not. The point is for us to grow closer to Him and to be open to Him moving in us and through us in our daily lives.

The Holy Spirit is *for you*, today. And as Jesus did for the Apostles, you can trust that He

will always be with you and in you all your life by your baptism.

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